

# Measure Up

Winter 2007-08

Assessment news for high school teachers



## ***Facts About NAEP 2008***

- From March 17 to May 23, 2008, over 13,000 seventeen-year-olds will take the NAEP long-term trend assessment in reading or mathematics.
- From January 28 to March 7, 2008, over 18,000 twelfth-graders will take the NAEP field tests in reading, mathematics or science, to help prepare for the 2009 assessments.
- Over 400 high schools have been selected to participate in NAEP 2008.
- Over 600 NAEP staff will administer NAEP 2008 to students.

## **Best Practices for Improving NAEP Participation in High Schools**

NAEP data provide valuable feedback for educators and policymakers who work to maintain and improve the quality of our educational system. Since NAEP is designed to test a representative sample of American students, the accuracy of NAEP relies on the full participation of all students. National results can be compromised if all selected students do not fully participate in the testing process. Your school is very important to The Nation's Report Card! In past NAEP assessments, high school principals and teachers have found the following strategies to be effective in encouraging and motivating high school students to participate and try their best.

- ★ Notify students of their selection to participate in the assessment. Provide them with an appointment card to remind the students sampled to attend the assessment sessions.
- ★ Share information about NAEP. Mention NAEP as an important

upcoming activity. Include information about NAEP in the school newspaper.

- ★ Speak with the participating students before the assessment day and let them know NAEP is important. Your enthusiasm and dedication will be conveyed to the students.
- ★ Give a pep talk to students at the beginning of each assessment session. You can personally introduce them to the NAEP staff, encourage students to do their best, and remind students that, by participating, they represent hundreds of other high school students across the country.
- ★ Consider ways to thank students for their participation. You could grant community service credits to participating students, provide free tickets to school events, or recognize students during school assemblies.

## Released NAEP Items and Scoring Guides: Valuable Classroom Resources for Instruction

Released NAEP items can be a valuable instructional tool for teachers. After each assessment, NAEP makes public some of the questions; more than 2,000 questions are available at the NAEP Questions Center (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls>).

For instance, NAEP writing questions can help students learn to evaluate their own writing. In order to self-assess effectively, students need to recognize the qualities of good writing. Students need specific instruction on evaluating writing using a rubric and they need exemplars of good written work. Once students become adept at evaluating writing according to a rubric, they can learn to evaluate and improve their own writing.

Each NAEP writing question comes with a scoring guide, samples of student writing for each score, and scorer's commentary to explain why each sample

of student writing was scored as it was. There are a variety of ways in which teachers can use the materials.

Teachers can:

- Use the scoring guide and samples of student writing to have students evaluate the samples using the rubric.
- Ask students to respond to the writing prompt and, after instruction in evaluating the NAEP student writing samples, ask students to evaluate their own writing.
- Examine the national and state student performance data for individual writing questions.

A sample grade 12 writing question, sample student responses, scoring guide and scorer's commentary are provided below.

Source: Foy, J. (2007). *NAEP Assessment Toolbox for Teachers: Easy-to-Use Classroom Activities Using Questions and Data from the National Assessment for Educational Progress*. Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, Anchorage, Alaska.

### Sample grade 12 writing question

**Who are our heroes? The media attention given to celebrities suggests that these people are today's heroes. Yet ordinary people perform extraordinary acts of courage every day that go virtually unnoticed. Are these people the real heroes?** Write an essay in which you define heroism and argue who you think our heroes really are—mass-media stars, ordinary people, or maybe both. Be sure to use examples of specific celebrities, other people you have heard or read about, or people from your own community to support your position.

### Sample student responses

#### Excellent:

*In most cultures, actions speak louder than words. What you do effects how people view you and what roads you will take in life (talk is cheap). In the world today those who 'walk the walk,' are often looked upon as being a hero of some sort. But what is a hero? In my definition, a hero is someone who, regardless of words, when it all comes down to it, acts in a way to help others without the thought of a reward in mind.*

*One of the best living definitions of this word, were found in the streets of New York City, September 11th. After the World Trade Center buildings collapsed, fire and rescue crews swarmed the scene to help injured and trapped victims. They worked night and day for 2 weeks searching, rescuing, and saving those who were involved in this incident. But for what? Was it the drive to get paid that caused them to go help these people? Or perhaps it was the fame they would get in later months and years at various sporting events and dinners. Both are wrong. They did it because they had to; it was what the human spirit inside of them told them to do. Now, sports announcers find other names to use for "heroes" of the field because the name hero has already been filled with the firefighters and police officers who helped and gave their lives to helping others.*

*So, what about the sports stars we call heroes? They make a million dollars a year to play a game and we call them heroes. Why? Because what they do? What do they do that is so heroic? Amazing, possibly. Talented, most definitely, but heroic? I think not. Americans throw around the word hero too much that it doesn't have meaning after a while. Credit is often not given to those whom it is due.*

*As short handed as they are, Americas teachers should be the ultimate heroes. They bust their butts all day everyday to educate the youth of America. And it's not for the pay. I can guarantee that. Teachers enjoy educating and inspiring young adults to be better people. Smarter people. They fit the definition as well. They act in such a way as to help others without a reward in mind.*

*A hero helps others regardless of the reward or punishment. Many Americans don't realize the influence 'real' heroes have on those other nations needs to rethink its definition of "hero."*

#### Scorer's commentary

Excellent responses offered consistent support for their positions in the form of well-chosen reasons and examples. In the sample response above, the writer uses the strategy of question/answer to advance and maintain the focus of his or her argument: "So, what about the sports stars we call heroes?" The response is also outstanding in its consistent variety in sentence structure and precise word choices.

#### Sufficient:

*Many people consider pop stars to be heroes, others consider extraordinary people to be heroes. First of all a hero is someone or something that performs an extraordinary act of courage. In this case people are obviously confusing the difference between heroes and idols. An idol is someone or something you look up to. Pop stars are usually considered idols, but people are thinking that heroes are who or what you look up to, too. This is true, but pop stars usually haven't performed extraordinary courageous acts. An example of a hero is someone or something.*

*Continued on next page*

## Scoring Guide Excerpts

### Excellent

- Takes a clear position and supports it consistently with well-chosen reasons and/or examples; may use persuasive strategy to convey an argument.
- Consistently exhibits variety in sentence structure and precision in word choice.

### Skillful

- Takes a clear position and supports it with pertinent reasons and/or examples through much of the response.
- Exhibits some variety in sentence structure and uses good word choice; occasionally, words may be used inaccurately.

### Sufficient

- Takes a clear position and supports it with some pertinent reasons and/or examples; there is some development.
- Sentence structure may be simple and unvaried; word choice is mostly accurate.

### Uneven

May be characterized by one or more of the following:

- Takes a position and provides uneven support; may lack development in parts or be repetitive OR is no more than a well-written beginning.
- Exhibits uneven control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; may exhibit some inaccurate word choices.

### Insufficient

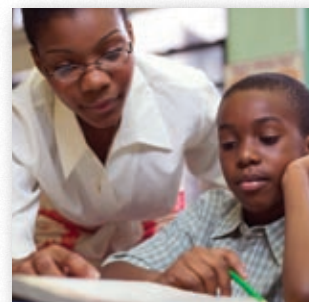
May be characterized by one or more of the following:

- Takes a position but is very undeveloped.
- Minimal control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may often be inaccurate.

### Unsatisfactory

May be characterized by one or more of the following:

- Attempts to take a position (addresses topic) but position is very unclear OR takes a position but provides minimal or no support; may only paraphrase the prompt.
- Minimal or no control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may be inaccurate in much or all of the response.



- To use released items in the classroom, teachers should visit <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard> and select "Sample Questions."
- From there, teachers can select "Questions Tool" followed by the subject. A series of questions will appear and teachers can review the questions, sample student responses, and performance data for students nationwide.

## Sample student responses - Continued from previous page

*The volunteers, FDNY and NYPD are exceptional heroes because of their acts of courage. Justin Timberlake from N\*Sync is an idol because others look up to him and want to be like him in fame and fortune. Therefore, I don't consider pop stars to be heroes because they are idols, and they are two different things. Anyone can be an idol, but only a few can be heroes.*

### Scorer's commentary

"Sufficient" responses took clear positions and developed those positions with some pertinent reasons or examples. Ideas were generally related with few transitions. The response above makes a clear argument that heroes are those who perform courageous acts, but lacks development and is only generally organized, due to an absence of transitions among ideas.

### Insufficient:

*To me, a hero can be too many things to just give a simple definition. The word hero brings to mind people single-handedly saving the world. It also brings to mind helping someone with a problem, or just being able to talk with someone. Anyone can be a hero to someone. Chances are, everyone is.*

### Scorer's commentary

"Insufficient" responses attempted to take positions and offer support but were very brief, disorganized, or marked by severe errors in sentence control and/or grammar. The "Insufficient" response above is underdeveloped.

### Unsatisfactory

*I think your heroes readily are both mass stars and ordinary people. The examples of specific celebrities is most of the people, they are read about mass media stars and ordinary people. How to perform to acts of courage in everyday. Also how to suggest that they are today's heroes. What makes them to become heroes. That was an important thing.*

### Scorer's commentary

"Unsatisfactory" responses responded to the prompt but either had positions that were very unclear or offered no coherent support for a position. The response above has errors in sentence structure and word choice severe enough to interfere with understanding across the response.

## What is the Nation's Report Card?

The Nation's Report Card informs the public about the academic achievement of elementary and secondary students in the United States. Report cards communicate the findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a continuing and nationally representative measure of achievement in various subjects over time.

For over three decades, NAEP assessments have been conducted periodically in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and other subjects. By collecting and reporting information on student performance at the national, state and local levels, NAEP is an integral part of our nation's evaluation of the condition and progress of education. Only information related to academic achievement and relevant variables is collected. The privacy of individual students and their families is protected, and the identities of participating schools are not released.

## If you want to...

## Visit...

**Learn** more about NAEP results

The Nation's Report Card at  
<http://nationsreportcard.gov>

**View** NAEP data for a particular state or contact your NAEP State Coordinator

The National Center for Education Statistics at  
<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states>

**Access** specific results for a grade level, subject, jurisdiction, and/or student groups

The NAEP Data Explorer at  
<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde>

**Find** information regarding the types of questions used on NAEP assessments or to view subject-specific questions

The NAEP Questions Tool at  
<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls>

**Download** a Sample Questions Booklet that contains sample test questions for the upcoming and previous assessments

The National Center for Education Statistics at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/booklets.asp>

**Learn** more about how policy is drafted for each NAEP assessment

The National Assessment Governing Board at  
<http://www.nagb.org>

**Offer** a comment or suggestion on NAEP

The National Center for Education Statistics mailbox at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/contactus.asp>

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